

Teke F133

Ntamba

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T78 of the most disparate and incongruous objects, [22] white, black, or red clay, ngula /Ed., redwood powder/, chicken feet, heads, beaks, claws, and feathers, shells, palm nuts, etc., all mixed together in a large pot or in an old worn basket. It is from this magic treasure that the fetisher takes a pinch or two which he wraps carefully in a little bag and hands over to those who resort to him. As for the human figurines so often found in the huts of the Bateke and Banfumu, we do not believe that they are fetishes. In our opinion, they are guardian figurines for children, carved before their birth and preserved until they reach marriageable age.

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824 Some fetishers manage to gain quite a reputation, and their services are purchased for a very high fee. They are familiar with the properties of certain plants, and they keep this knowledge secret and exploit it as much as possible. It would be wrong to believe that the fetisher's practices are all based on mystification.

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695 Ebandia, the high chief of the Mosengere, knew the secret of certain poisons. He knew effective remedies for certain kinds of festering wounds; he proportioned the quantity of poison at ordeals so as to make its action violent or slow, and he was familiar with an antidote which cancelled out the effects of the poison.

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684 A few hours before our arrival at Penge, Ebandia had subjected [23] one of his wives to trial by poison, on the mere suspicion that she might have gone too far with a native during a slightly prolonged stay in the forest. Ebandia accused her of adultery, prepared the beverage, and compelled the poor woman to prove her innocence by taking the poison. The unfortunate creature rebelled. A quarrel arose, and the village natives, when informed of the matter, protested against it, to no avail, however. The old tyrant carried out the ordeal. He had been notified of our impending arrival, and after allowing the unfortunate woman to suffer horribly for nearly two hours, he gave her the antidote. Five hours later, all the effects of the poison were gone. [Ed., the text is not translated from the last paragraph, page 23, to the second paragraph, page 26.]

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T64 [26] In general the natives have a kind of cult of the dead. In the Bateke-Banfumu region, the corpse is wrapped in fabrics. The more important the deceased person is, the larger the bundle. His whole wealth in fabrics goes with him to the grave. Prior

276 According to native belief, the kola nut ensures the fertility
842 of a woman if sexual relations take place the night after the man
has used this stimulant.

276 The regular use of kola induces very intense nervous excite-
ment. We noticed that the adolescents and men in their prime
scarcely use it. Only the old people use it regularly. Kakua,
the old native chief, chewed it from morning to night. One day I
pointed this out to him, asking if he were not afraid of the danger-
ous effects of this overindulgence. He proudly pointed out to me
the huts of his seven wives, saying, "Ask them if they don't have
children!"

276 Among the stimulants we may also mention the peanut,
263 widely used by all the tribes, a type of small ground pea, and
278 certain tree roots known to the natives but the exact nature of
which we unfortunately could
not determine. It is well to
note, moreover, that most of
the natives use the stimulants as
medicaments as well as condi-
ments. They are used for in-
testinal pains, colic, and as
purgatives.



Fig. 81. Carrying Firewood.

463 In all the tribes the prep-
252 aration of food and meals is ex-
clusively the task of women.
They always do it with great care
[142]

252 The kitchen, if it can be
called one, is always very sim-
ple. If the weather is good,
cooking is done in the open in
the middle of the village, in
front of the hut or behind it,

[463] and very often in the shade of the banana trees. If the weather is
[313] rainy or cold, the women prepares the meals inside the hut. [Ed.,
a passage is omitted here.]

843 bokeka. The same is true if the pregnancy is the result of adultery;
837 the natural father must bear all the consequences of his act. The husband is absolved from them and has no relations with his wife until the end of this particular pregnancy. The culprit must give him a pledge by which he publically recognizes his responsibility, and he is expected to fulfill all the duties of a husband. Therefore he may have relations with the woman during her entire pregnancy without paying additional indemnities. If any accident befalls the mother or the child, he is made to pay a large indemnity.

Note finally that, as we have pointed out in Chapter II, [583] Article XI, no bride-price payment can be made from the time the pregnancy becomes visible until after the end of the period of seclusion.

843 To facilitate childbirth the previously mentioned concoction of various leaves mixed with kaolin (isaaf) is continuously applied to the abdomen. Medical scarifications on the abdomen are also performed.
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Finally, as the time of delivery approaches, special douches ● [278] made from a concoction of the bark of the bofmbo tree (1) are

1. Certain douches, especially the one made of bofmbo, are also used as abortive agents.

administered. All these treatments are called beté byā boānjā, that is, medicines (for the purpose) of an easy delivery.

Article III. Birth

844 1. Delivery

A woman remains with her husband for childbirth; she does not go home to her family. Only exceptionally does she give birth elsewhere -- for instance, if she has been sent home for one reason or another, or during a trip, while working in the fields, near a stream, or a spring, etc. Such sudden unexpected deliveries

844 are not too rare. (2)

2. Ease in delivery is called bosānjā;
difficulty is called bonsombo.

A husband asks his mother-in-law to come and help her daughter. Other kinswomen of the husband or the wife do not refuse [482] their services either. Among them there is always one who is more expert in these matters and who acts as a midwife (mbótsi).

The delivery takes place in the banana grove behind the hut; there is light and air there. In the house it would be more difficult.

The husband cannot be present at this event. His presence would make it difficult and painful. The further away he is, the better. The prohibition is not rigid, however; if there is no one to help his wife (as in the case of an unexpected delivery in the forest, etc.), he will have no hesitation whatsoever in helping her with all the power and skill at his command.

To facilitate the arrival of the child, the midwife gives the wife a potion to drink "in order to make slippery" (boté wā boséli), and administers a douche containing bofimo bark.

If the pains continue for several days and all medication is 845 without results, it is assumed that some evil spell (liloka) is at work. To neutralize it the woman in labor is "blessed" (-saka). For that purpose her family and that of her husband each bring a stalk of the bokaakó plant (bosāfānga). Two kinswomen, each with the stalk of her respective clan, squeeze out the sap with which they smear the woman's abdomen. After that the delivery takes place in a normal fashion.

845 The nkanga (doctor-magician) only intervenes when a woman 756 has already had several miscarriages or when all her children die. 769 If he is consulted he invariably attributes such misfortunes to the action of spirits of the deceased, who may be appeased by offerings and the promise that a manifestation of their will be heeded with respect to the naming of the child. Usually he adds that a few alimentary prohibitions must be observed until the child is weaned.

846 of a dried banana leaf. Three knots are tied in it. The helper holds it in one hand and with the other cuts off the first knot, which she carries away with her. The mother keeps her end in her hand and presents the other to her husband. She receives the knife from the hands of the helper and cuts between the two knots so that each spouse carries away his end. Each time the parties involved say, "We have cut the bofofó; we are separating; go away." Having thus bid each other farewell, each fastens his end to the roof of the seclusion hut.

846 This ceremony ends the period of seclusion and puts an end
837 to the ekelé prohibitions. From then on the couple may have sexual relations together, the helper can resume her usual life, and adultery on the part of the father can no longer harm the child or the mother. Note, however, that the child's immunity to the father's misconduct implies one condition: the father must not take it on his knees the day he commits adultery. By the following day the effects of his act have been nullified. A woman can discover her husband's infidelity through his refusal to take the child. Often she makes use of this means to obtain a confirmation of her suspicions. Some men abstain from all misconduct solely to guard against any such possibility. Adultery may have a harmful influence on the child even after it is weaned if it has a weak constitution. [491] All this seems to indicate that the reaction is considered to be physical and direct rather than a sanction based on religion or superstition.

846 Nkundó therapeutics include an antidote, however; it is
789 called bondandota (from ndota "an illness caused by the infraction of prohibitions of a sexual nature"). It consists of a potion made from the sap of an aroid bearing the same name, which is mixed with the sap of the libúlkakó plant. If for some reason or other the couple have been away from each other for a fairly long time, they sit or stand face to face and take the child on their knees, which touch each other, and each one makes the child drink the potion twice, once from each hand, making sure to turn its face toward him [or her]. Usually the couple also drink some of the brew, though it is intended primarily for the child. Without these precautions the relations between the pair and the father's

837 Note, finally, that the confession is restricted to married
783 women. It is never expected of a young unmarried mother. There-
853 fore it would seem to be a practice connected with marriage (a
social institution) and not with childbirth (a physiological phenome-
non).

[192] This confession is called etato or lotato, from the verb
-tata, "to confess," (for which the generic term, sanga, "to say,"
is sometimes substituted).

I was unable to find any reason for this practice other than
that of avoiding the death of the child. It is evident, however,
that this explanation does not exhaust the question, although it is
entirely possible that the original and deeper meaning has been lost
without leaving any trace in the minds of the present generation.
[496]

853 3) During the entire duration of nursing, the mother must
933 not be separated from her child. For the usual circumstances of
daily life, this rule is broadly interpreted; but during sexual rela-
tions it is strict, and no exceptions or excuses are permitted. Negli-
gence under these circumstances would inevitably bring about the
death of the child by ndota as soon as the mother took it back.
This rule holds for legitimate relations as much as for illicit ones.
Therefore the mother must always keep her child at her breast.

953 4) If at some point during nursing, the milk no longer flows
[757] in sufficient quantity, the mother is given a potion consisting of
[278] the extract of the bark of the bolongé tree (which has a fruit con-
taining a very sweet milky sap). Then she eats vegetables called
lotélé. (1)

1. The leaves of this plant are also
ordinarily eaten as vegetables, but
they are consumed especially by
those who possess the modern magi-
cal practice known as boyaóli.

[262] 5) An accident to which the Nkundó attach great importance
is the rejection or vomiting of milk into the mouth of an adult,
even if the person affected is the infant's mother. Such a person